

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
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R 221945Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7199  
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 3325

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN 3325 VICE 3225)

TEGUCIGALPA - PASS O'GRADY

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SEDU, NU  
SUBJECT: POLITICIZATION OF CUS

REF: MANAGUA 3260

SUMMARY: THE CONFEDERATION OF LABOR UNIFICATION (CUS) HAS DECIDED TO ACTIVELY INVOLVE ITSELF WITH THE ANTI-SOMOZA OPPOSITION. THIS, IT SAYS, IS AN IRREVOCABLE DECISION AND THE LEADERSHIP OF CUS IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT ANY CONSEQUENCES OF ITS DECISION. EMB REQUESTS DEPARTMENT GUIDANCE ON MAINTENANCE OF EMB AND AIFLD CONTACTS WITH CUS. END SUMMARY.

1. LABOFF VISITED HEADQUARTERS OF CUS ON 20 JULY TO EXCHANGE IMPRESSIONS OF EFFECTIVENESS OF ONE-DAY NATIONAL WORK STOPPAGE AND TO ATTEMPT TO GAUGE CUS PLANS FOR FUTURE ACTION IN LIGHT OF COMMUNIQUE ISSUES 18 JULY (REFTEL).

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THREE MEMBERS OF CUS EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP WERE PRESENT, INCLUDING SECGEN OF ORGANIZATION. CUS LEADERS INDICATED THAT, OUTSIDE OF THE CAPITAL, THE WORK STOPPAGE WAS VERY EFFECTIVE AND ALL CUS AFFILIATES HAD STAYED AWAY FROM THEIR PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT. INMANAGUA, FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, THEY ESTIMATED A 50 PERCENT ABSENCE FROM WORK BY CUS AFFILIATES. CUS SAW THE WORK STOPPAGE NOT AS A REGIME-TOPPLING EVENT BUT AS AN EXPRESSION OF POPULAR

OPPOSITION TO CONDITIONS IN NICARAGUA AND OPPOSITION TO THE GON.

2. PROCEEDING TO THE QUESTION OF FUTURE CUS PLANS, LABOFF REQUESTED CLARIFICATION AS TO CUS' "COMMON CAUSE" WITH MDN AND INTEGRATION INTO FAO (REFTEL. CUS LEADERS CONFIRMED THAT, AS INDIVIDUALS, THEY BELONGED TO MDN (NOTE: THE MDN IS COMPOSED ONLY OF INDIVIDUALS, NOT ORGANIZATIONS. END NOTE) AND THE CUS AS AN ORGANIZATION WOULD JOIN FAO. THEY READ LABOFF TEXT OF LETTER TO BE SENT TO FAO FORMALLY REQUESTING MEMBERSHIP. CUS LEADERS EXPLAINED THAT PARTICIPATION IN THE ANTI-GON STRUGGLES WAS A SINE QUANON OF THE FUTURE RELEVANCE OF THE ORGANIZATION TO THE NICARAGUAN SCENE. FOR TOO LONG, THEY CONTINUED, THE CUS HAD BEEN POPULARLY IDENTIFIED AS A "TOOL" OF THE USG. TO REMAIN ON THE SIDELINES OF CURRENT EVENTS WOULD ONLY REINFORCE THIS IMAGE. THEREFORE, THE CUS WAS ENTERING THE POLITICAL ARENA, COME WHAT MAY. LABOFF REMINDS THEM THAT, RUMORS WERE ALREADY CIRCULATING LINKING THE CUS' ACTION TO A SHIFT IN USG POLICY, IDENTIFYING ALFONSO ROBELO (LEADER OF THE MDN) AS RECEIVING USG SUPPORT VIA THE CUS. CUS LEADERS WERE FIRM IN STATING THAT THEY WOULD DO EVERYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO EMPHASIZE THAT THEY WERE ACTING INDEPENDENTLY AND HAD NO TIES TO USG. THEY STATED THAT THEY WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY USG OR AIFLD AS INSPIRING OR SUPPORTING CUS ACTIONS. THEY WERE HOPEFUL THAT AIFLD LINK WOULD NOT BE SEVERED, BUT EMPHASIZED THAT AIFLD SUPPORT (MINIMAL FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE) WAS A SECONDARY CONSIDERATION AT THE MOMENT. THE CUS LEADERS NOTED THAT THE AFL-CIO HAD A LONG HISTORY OF POLI-  
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TICAL INVOLVEMENT AND THAT THE CUS HAD BEEN EDUCATED BY AFL-CIO PROGRAMS (VIA AIFLD)." WHAT WAS GOOD FOR THE GOOSE, WAS GOOD FOR THE GANDER," THEY SAID.

4. LABOFF INQUIRED AS TO CUS' METHOD OF DECIDING TO JOIN FAO AND SUPPORT WORK STOPPAGE. CUS LEADERS REPLIED THAT EXECUTIVE BOARD HAD CONSULTED WITH LEADERS OF DEPARTMENTAL AFFILIATES WHO HAD SUPPORTED SUCH ACTION. CUS LEADERS EXPLAINED THAT SUCH DECISIONS DID NOT REQUIRE VOT OF ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP. LABOFF THEN ASKED HOW FAR THEY WERE PREPARED TO GO IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FAO- CAUTIONING THEM THAT THEY MIGHT BE SWEEPED ALONG INTO ACTIVITIES NOT NECESSARILY IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS. CUS LEADERS RESPONDED VAGUELY THAT, SHOULD THEY PERCEIVE THAT FAO WAS HEADING IN DIRECTIONS CONFLICTING WITH CUS'S IDENTITY AS A DEMOCRATIC LABOR ORGANIZATION, IT WOULD WITHDRAW FROM FAO. LABOFF INQUIRED AS TO WHAT GUARANTEES CUS HAD RECEIVED OF FINANCIAL OR OTHER SUPPORT, AS WELL AS SAFEGUARDS TO ENSURE THAT THE CUS NAME WOULD NOT SIMPLY BE APPENDED TO THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS COMPOSING FAO WHEN COMMUNIQUEES WERE ISSUED, WITHOUT PREVIOUS CONSULTATION. CUS LEADERS RESPONDED THAT NO SPECIFICS HAD BEEN ARRANGED, BUT THE MDN AND FAO WOULD SUPPORT CUS AND ALL DECISIONS WOULD BE ARRIVED AT IN A "DEMOCRATIC" MANNER LABOFF CAUTIONED CUS LEADERS

THAT ABUSES COULD OCCUR IN THE NAME OF DEMOCRACY.

5. COMMENT/IT APPEARS THAT CUS ACTIONS TAKEN MORE AS A RESULT OF PERSONAL CONVICTIONS OF LEADERS THAN DUE TO MEMBERSHIP PRESSURE FOR SUCH ACTION. EMB UNDERSTANDS THAT ROBELO MET WITH CUS LEADERS ONLY DAYS PRIOR TO CUS COMMUNIQUE AND DECISION TO JOIN FAO. WHILE IT IS NOT YET KNOWN WHAT, IF ANY, AGREEMENTS WERE MADE, CUS SUPPORT OF THE MDN SERVES TO GIVE ROBELO AN APPEARANCE OF BROADER SUPPORT. HERETOFORE, CONSIDERED A REPRESENTATIVE OF MONIED, BUSINESS INTERESTS, THE ADHERENCE OF CUS LEADERS LENDS ROBELO AN AURA OF POPULISM. AT THIS POINT, EMB SEES A DISTINCTION BETWEEN A UNION FOLLOWING A POLICY BASED ON A POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND A UNION TAKING A POLITICAL STANCE IN RESPONSE TO CURRENT CONDITIONS. EMB BELIEVES CUS FALLS WITHIN LATTER CATEGORY AND CONFIDENTIAL

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PROPOSES TO CONTINUE CURRENT LEVEL OF CONTACTS, WITH AIFLD ADVISED TO DO SAME.

ACTION REQUESTED: EMB AND AIFLD DIRECTOR REQUEST GUIDANCE ON FUTURE CONTACTS WITH CUS.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
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